

The Oklahoma Air National Guard at Will Rogers ANG Base officially received a new name and new flying mission on April 1. The 137th Airlift Wing will now be called the 137th Air Refueling Wing to reflect its' new assignment operating the KC-135R Stratotanker.

The change comes after a 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision that sought to restructure and consolidate like missions and increase efficiency and effectiveness throughout the Air Force. Part of the Commission's decision was to transfer the Oklahoma ANG's existing airlift mission and the eight C-130 Hercules aircraft to other airlift bases across the country. The BRAC recommendations also called for a first-of-its-kind association with the Air Force Reserve's 507th Air Refueling Wing at Tinker Air Force Base.

"Essentially, the 137th ARW will continue to enhance global reach by operating and maintaining aircraft owned by the Air Force Reserve command," said Col. Greg Ferguson, 137th ARW Commander. "Through this unique Air Reserve Component association the two wings will share the 12 primary assigned aircraft on an equal basis. This is a historic chapter in the Air Force's commitment to Total Force Integration."

This means big changes for two of the 137th's subordinate units. The 185th Air Refueling Squadron, made up mostly of aircrew members, and the 137th Maintenance Group will be geographically separated units and operate almost entirely out of Tinker Air Force Base.

Despite these changes, Col. Ferguson said WRANGB remains a strong and viable base with more than 900 members still on site.

"The wing headquarters operations and all of the support for the flying mission, including portions of supply, finance, medical and more will continue to be provided by the parent wing at WRANGB," he said. "We also provide support to three tenant organizations including the 205th Engineering Installation Squadron, the 146th Air Support Operations Squadron and the Army National Guard's C-23 Sherpa Detachment 1 Company A 249 Aviation."

After more than 30 years of performing the C-130H mission, Col. Ferguson said it was tough to say goodbye to the most versatile airlifter ever built.

“The 137th Airlift Wing has always been there in a moment’s notice for peace time and war time operations for the State of Oklahoma, our neighboring states, and our great country. The personnel at this wing have made significant contributions to major federal and state operations including Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. We were one of the first states to respond flying medical aide in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and we assisted New Mexico several years back, air dropping hay to snow bound and starving cattle. We did it all effectively and efficiently and with one of the best safety records in the Air Force,” he said.

The KC-135 Stratotankers principal mission is air refueling but the tanker is also capable of some airlift and transporting litter and ambulatory patients during aero medical evacuations.